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Support for Democracy in Korea:
Its Trends and Determinants



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The seal of Korea University is a circular emblem with a traditional Korean design, featuring a central figure and surrounding text in Korean. It is positioned behind the author's name.

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A Comparative Survey of Democracy, Governance and Development

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South Korea (Korea hereafter) is widely known as one of the emerging market democracies in Asia (Whitehead 2002). It transformed one of the world's poorest economies into an economic powerhouse within a single generation (Kim and Hong 1997). It has also undergone a political transformation from military rule to a representative democracy for more than a decade. In Asia, it is one of a few new democracies that have not only transferred power peacefully to an opposition party but also transformed its state capitalism into a competitive market economy. In the world of new democracies undergoing the dual structural transformation of politics and economy, Korea is the first new market democracy to recover from the economic crisis that erupted in Asia nearly seven years ago. In the scholarly community, therefore, Korea is acknowledged as one of the most vigorous and analytically interesting third-wave democracies (Chu, Diamond and Shin 2001; Diamond and Kim 2000; Diamond and Shin 2000; S. Kim 2003). In policy circles, it is also increasingly regarded as a model of market liberalization and political democratization (Bremner and Moon 2002; Haggard 2000; Lemco 2002).

Yet, many researchers wonder how satisfied ordinary Koreans are with the working of their new democracy and how much trust they place in their democratic political institutions. In this paper we explore the dynamics of democratic satisfaction and institutional trust among the Korean public especially in the wake of the economic crisis in 1997.

The paper is organized into five sections. The first section reviews the historical development of institutional democratization in Korea. The second section discusses the conceptualization and measurement of support for democracy. The third section deals with the

trends in popular support for democracy, especially satisfaction with the working of democracy and trust in political institutions. The fourth section examines the influence of economy, politics and governance on democratic satisfaction and institutional trust. The final section highlights the key findings and explores their implications from theoretical perspectives.

Institutional Democratization

Korea is one of the many new democracies that evolved out of military dictatorships (Huntington 1991). During the period of 1987-88, Korea accomplished a peaceful transformation to a democratic state that allowed the people to choose their president and other political leaders through free and competitive elections. During nearly three decades prior to the advent of democracy (1961-1987), the civilianized military ruled the country as a developmental dictatorship with a rationale of promoting economic development and strengthening national security against the Communist North (Moon 1994). Institutionally, the developmental state provided the president with unprecedented and unlimited powers to the extent that he dissolved the National Assembly and took emergency measures whenever he deemed them necessary (Lim 1998).

By invoking emergency decrees and illiberal laws, the civilianized military dictatorships headed by former generals suppressed political opposition and curtailed freedom of expression and association (Moon and Kim 1996). Through state security agencies, the authoritarian regimes placed the news media under strict censure and kept labor unions and universities under constant surveillance. Moreover, they controlled and manipulated opposition parties and other professional or occupational organizations. By suppressing political opposition and limiting popular political participation, the authoritarian dictatorships insulated the state from the influence of civil society (Jang 2000). In pre-democratic Korea, it was state technocrats and bureaucrats, not elected representatives, who played the key role in state governance.

The current constitution, which was ratified in a national referendum in 1987, has laid out a

new institutional foundation for representative democracy. It provides for direct election of the president with a single five-year term. As in the past, the president serves as the head of the state and the government. Yet the president's powers are reduced considerably, while those of the legislative and judicial bodies are expanded significantly. Specifically, the president's powers regarding emergency decrees and dissolution of parliament are abolished. The National Assembly's power to oversee the executive branch, on the other hand, is broadened and strengthened. The process of appointing judges is institutionalized to ensure the independence of the judiciary. The Constitutional Court is newly instituted to defend the principles of the democratic constitution and to ensure the rule of law. The limits of civil liberties and political rights are extended and the protection of economic and social rights is strengthened. The constitution protects political parties from being disbanded by arbitrary governmental action. The constitution also explicitly requires the military to maintain political neutrality.

To promote the democratic principles of the new constitution, popularly elected governments headed by the two best-known opponents of military rule adopted a variety of democratic reforms. The Kim Young Sam government (1993-1998), for example, instituted civilian supremacy over the military and enforced the constitutional principle of political neutrality of the military (Kil 2001). This civilian government also enacted the financial reform legislation to dismantle the structure of chronic political corruption. The Kim Dae Jung government (1998-2003) furthered democratization by extending the limits of economic and social rights. It strengthened the social security program to include health, unemployment, pension, and workers' accident compensation insurances (Shin and Lee 2003). With these reforms, the Korean political regime moved beyond electoral democracy and embarked on a new path leading to democratic consolidation.

Since the transition to democracy in 1987, popular elections have become the only method

to choose governors and lawmakers at the national, provincial, and local levels of government. Four free and competitive presidential elections have taken place during the past decade and a half. In the presidential election in 1997, Korea established itself as a mature electoral democracy by elevating an opposition party to political power. In the latest presidential election in 2002, Korean voters for the first time elected a progressive candidate to lead their divided nation. In addition to these presidential elections, five rounds of parliamentary elections have also enabled the people to choose their representatives to the National Assembly. In sub-national units as well, popularly elected governors and legislators have taken the place of appointees of the central government.

These electoral and other political reforms promoted the democratization of politics and state governance. With the abolition of anti-libertarian laws and rules that suppressed public protest and limited the news media, freedom of expression and association has been thrown wide open. The institutionalization of democratic elections for both local and national governments has also expanded popular involvement in electoral politics and state governance. New public and private interest groups have been formed as competing forces against state institutions. Today, more than six thousand non-governmental organizations are known to operate in Korea (Lim 2000; see also S. Kim 2000). As a result, civic associations and interest groups have become increasingly significant players in state governance, which was formerly dominated by state bureaucrats and technocrats.

These institutional reforms have consolidated democratic elections and expanded civil liberties and political rights. The reforms have firmly established civilian control over the military (Steinberg 2000). Accordingly, Korean democracy today meets the institutional conditions for procedural democracy or polyarchy specified by Dahl (1971) and many other scholars (Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub and Limongi 2000; Rose, Mishler and Haerpfer 1998; Schmitter and Karl 1991). It is a political regime characterized by free and fair elections, universal adult suffrage, multiparty

competition, civil liberties, and a free press.

Thus, it is no wonder that for the past ten years (1993-2003) Korea has received an average rating of 2.0 on Freedom House's scale of political rights and civil liberties, placing it within the ranks of the world's liberal democracies. Indeed, it has achieved greater success in transforming its authoritarian political institutions than many of its democratizing predecessors and contemporaries (Im 2000). Unlike new democracies in Latin America, Korea has fully restored civilian rule by extricating the military from power and has established the minimal architecture of procedural democracy. It has also become the first new democracy in Asia to transfer power peacefully to an opposition party. In the Western media and scholarly community, therefore, Korea is increasingly mentioned as a possible model of democratization for the emerging post-authoritarian countries in the world (*New York Times* 1998; *Wall Street Journal* 1992).

Nonetheless, Korea may still be seen neither a well-functioning representative democracy nor a consolidated democracy. Korea's inability to progress steadily as a mature democracy has much to do with the nature of its state governance, which often displays immobilizing institutional deadlock and political bickering (Mo 2001; Park 2002). In every parliamentary election held since the democratic transition in 1987, more than three political parties participated (Jaung 2000). Because these parties have regionally concentrated electoral bases of support, no president's party has ever obtained a majority in the legislature, except in the latest election in 2004. Without stable majority support in the legislature, Korean presidents lack political and institutional leverage to deal with protracted policy gridlock. To overcome this sort of political immobilization, presidents have often resorted to political or extra-legal tactics. They have merged political parties and often intimidated opposition lawmakers. Their frequent use of prosecutorial power for political purposes has undermined the rule of law and the political neutrality of judiciary authorities. Their abuse of government power has threatened freedom of expression, as evidenced in the Kim Dae Jung

government's tax investigations of the major newspapers that were critical of its policy.

Under the Kim Dae Jung government, Korean democracy suffered serious setbacks. As in the authoritarian past, an inordinate array of disparate powers still remained concentrated in the hands of the president and his close associates. Frequent refusal by the executive branch to be accountable to the National Assembly thereby opened the door to what O'Donnell (1994) calls "delegative democracy" and undermined the institutional foundation of a representative democracy (Kirk 2001; Struck 2002; see also Przeworski, Stokes, and Manin 1999). As revealed by some political corruption scandals, in which the president's sons were implicated, and the concealment of US \$450 million in backdoor aid to North Korea (Chang 2002; Larkin 2001; Jung 2002), moreover, informal and personal political rules, not the formal and transparent rules of democratic governance, often shaped major national policies.

As the historical development of Korean institutional democratization shows, Korea has been successful in establishing democratic elections and extending the limits of political rights and freedoms. Yet, it apparently fails to make steady progress in democratizing state governance. How do ordinary Koreans, then, perceive the working of their democracy and the performance of their state institutions? How much do they support democracy-in-action?

Support for Democracy

As Diamond (1999) illustrates, support for democracy is one of the important concepts in understanding the dynamics of democratic consolidation. Sharing this view, many researchers of third-wave democracies have been investigating the patterns and dynamics of political support in new democracies in Southern, Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Africa by using national or cross-national survey data (Rose, Mishler and Haerpfer, 1998; Morlino and Montero, 1995; Camp, 2001; Lagos, 2001; Bratton and Mattes, 2001).

Before describing the patterns and dynamics of support for democracy in Korea, let us

briefly discuss the concept of political support. In his seminal work, Easton (1965) theoretically distinguishes three objects of political support, namely, the community, the regime and the authorities. The political community refers to “a group of persons bound together by a political division of labor,” the regime refers to the authority structure and its justifications, and the authorities refer to the present incumbents of authority roles. Among them, the regime is directly relevant for the present analysis of support for democracy. The regime consists of two dimensions: structural and ideological. The structural dimension refers to the structures of authority while the ideological one their principles and norms. Therefore, support for democracy as a political regime may refer to support for democratic principles and norms as well as democratic structures of authority.

Easton (1975) also makes the diffuse-specific support distinction based on its differing durability. Diffuse support is a deep-seated loyalty to the political system that is less susceptible to daily governmental performance. It serves as a reserve of support during periods of adversity. In contrast, specific support is based on the fulfillment of demands or satisfaction with outputs. It fluctuates in accordance with daily governmental performance. It is closely related to the actions and performance of the political actors of the day. The consequences of political support on democratic stability greatly vary depending upon whether it is diffuse or specific. When diffuse support is high, dissatisfaction with outputs does not necessarily undermine regime stability. On the other hand, when diffuse support is low, dissatisfaction with outputs may seriously undermine regime stability. In the long run, however, satisfaction with outputs tends to engender diffuse support while dissatisfaction with outputs may gradually erode it.

In developing an analytic framework for critical citizens, Norris (1999) follows the distinctions provided by David Easton. She further elaborates three objects of regime support - principles, performance and institutions. Regime principles are the first object of regime support.

They represent the values of the political system. In surveys support for democratic regime principles is often measured by agreement with the idea of democracy as the best form of government or the most preferred political system (Klingemann 1999; Dalton 1999; Rose, Shin and Munro 1999). However, such measurement appears to obscure the distinction between the structural and the ideological dimension proposed by David Easton. Without making its referents democratic values or principles, the measurement captures generalized support for democracy as a whole. It should be noted that this kind of measurement reflects support for democracy as an idea, not democracy-in-action.

Regime performance is the second object of regime support. It refers to support for how regimes function in practice. In surveys support for democratic regime performance is often measured by how democracy functions in practice, that is, satisfaction with the working of democracy (Norris 1999; Fuchs, Guidorossi and Svensson 1995; Rose, Shin and Munro 1999; Evans and Whitefield 1995; Bratton and Mattes 2001; Weil 1989; Anderson and Guillory 1997). Regime performance is usually measured through comparing current regimes against either the ideal or older regimes (Mishler and Rose 1999). However it is measured, support for democracy at this level reflects evaluation of democracy-in-action, which should be distinguished from support for democracy as an idea or democracy-in-principle. Similarly, Klingemann (1999) points out that satisfaction with democracy can be used to capture evaluations of democratic performance more than principles.

Regime institutions are the third object of regime support. By referring to the formal structures, not the incumbents of authority roles, regime support at this level reflects attitudes toward political institutions, not particular political actors. It often is measured by confidence in separate public institutions such as parliaments, presidency, the legal system and police, the state bureaucracy, political parties, and the military (Weatherford 1987; Miller and Listhaug 1999;

Finkel, Muller and Seligson 1989; Listhaug and Wiberg 1995; Lipset and Schneider 1987). With reference to political institutions, they seek to capture attitudes toward institutions rather than people in them. This level of regime support should not be equated with support for democracy as an idea. It reflects evaluation of democratic performance as the second level of regime support does. However, it largely captures the performance of specific political institutions.

As Norris (1999) rightly notes, support for democracy is a multi-dimensional or multi-level phenomenon. Sharing this view, we follow the distinction between different objects or levels of democratic support, which consists of a continuous dimension from specific to diffuse support. For instance, support for democracy as an idea is more diffuse than satisfaction with the performance of democracy or confidence in political institutions. Approval of incumbents or satisfaction with governmental performance reflects the most specific type of support.

In particular, we maintain the distinction between democracy as an idea and democracy-in-action. We also note that democratic performance can be measured by evaluating either the working of democracy as a whole or the performance of specific political institutions. Although both largely capture support for democracy-in-action, their foci may differ. For instance, trust in political institutions may primarily reflect evaluation of the exercise of power while satisfaction with the working of democracy primarily evaluation of the constitution of power. In the following sections we explore the patterns and dynamics of support for democracy-in-action or evaluation of democratic performance among the Korean population.

Data

The data for the present study were derived from a series of the Korean Democracy Barometer (hereafter KDB) surveys conducted during the 1996-2004 period and the 2003 East Asia Barometer (hereafter EAB) survey as far as they include parallel questions concerning support for democracy-in-action. The KDB surveys was conducted by the Korea

Gallup polling organization in January 1996 (N=1,000), May 1997 (N=1,117), October 1998 (N=1,010), November 1999 (N=1,007), March-April 2001 (N=1,007) and June 2004 (N=1,037). The EAB survey (N=1,500) was conducted by the Garam polling organization in February 2003. All of these surveys sampled members of the Korean population 20 years old and older.

Trends in Support for Democracy

Democratic legitimacy

How strongly do ordinary Koreans support democracy as an idea or the most preferred form of government? To address this question, the KDB and the EAB surveys repeatedly asked respondents whether democracy is always preferable to any other kind of government or a dictatorship is preferable under certain situations. Figure 1 shows the percentage believing democracy is always preferable to any other kind of government. The trajectory of support for democracy as an idea displays both downward and upward changes over the 1996-2004 period. First, it has declined from 65 percent in 1996, 54 percent in 1998 to 45 percent in 2001. Then, it bounced up to 58 percent in 2004. Although a recent trajectory becomes steadily upward, only less than three-fifths of the Korean people express unconditional loyalty to democracy. Level of democratic commitment still remain 10 percent lower than what they were eight years ago.

(Figure 1 here)

It is notable that the largest drop (14%) in unconditional commitment to democracy occurred in the wake of the economic crisis in late 1997. In May 1997, more than two-thirds (68%) expressed unconditional commitment to democracy while in October 1998, only slightly more than one-half (54%) did so. It is also notable that unconditional commitment to democracy increased from 47 percent in 2001, 50 percent in 2003 to 58 percent in 2004. The rise occurred in the wake of the change in government leadership in 2003. It is intriguing that under the Kim Dae

Jung government the trajectory of support for democracy as an idea was in the downward direction. Although popular support for democracy recently began to rise, democratic legitimacy still is not overwhelmingly upheld among the Korean population.

Democratic satisfaction

How satisfied are ordinary Koreans with the way their democracy works? To address this question the KDB surveys repeatedly asked respondents to indicate on a 10-point scale the extent to which they are satisfied or dissatisfied with the performance of democracy. A score of 1 on this scale means ‘completely dissatisfied’, while a score of 10 indicates ‘completely satisfied.’ In contrast, the 2003 EAB survey measured satisfaction with the working of democracy by using a 4-point verbal scale, the values of which range from 1 (‘very satisfied’) to 4 (‘not at all satisfied’). In order to make both scales comparable, the bottom (1-5) and top five (6-10) numeric ratings of the 10-point scale were collapsed into two broad categories: satisfied and dissatisfied. Likewise, the four values of the 4-point verbal scale were collapsed into the same categories.

Figure 1 shows the percentage indicating some degree of satisfaction with the working of democracy. In 1996 the percentage satisfied with democratic performance was 55 percent. It sharply dropped to 34 percent in May 1997 in the wake of the investigations of corruption scandals in which the president’s son and his close associated were implicated. Since then the trajectory of democratic satisfaction was in the upward direction. It has gradually risen from 44 percent in 1998, 47 percent in 2001, to 60 percent in 2004. In the 2003 EAB survey, which used a 4-point verbal scale, more than three-fifths (61%) of the Korean people expressed some degree of democratic satisfaction. In the 2004 KDB survey, which used a 10-point scale, a similar figure of 60 percent express some degree of democratic satisfaction. Notable is that satisfaction with democratic performance sharply increased in the wake of the presidential election in late 2002.

Institutional trust

How much trust do ordinary Koreans have in political institutions? In order to address this question, the 1996 and 1997 KDB surveys and the 2003 EAB survey asked respondents how much trust they have in public institutions such as the national government (the executive), the legislature, courts, civil service, the military, the police and political parties. These public institutions except political parties consist of key state institutions while the executive, the legislature and courts, the three branches of government.

Table 1 shows the percentage having some degree of trust in each of these public institutions. For every public institution, public trust has dramatically declined over the period of 1996-2003: the executive (from 62 percent in 1996 to 26 percent in 2003), the legislature (from 49 percent in 1996, 31 percent in 1997 to 15 percent in 2003), courts (from 70 percent in 1996, 58 percent in 1997 to 51 percent in 2003), civil service (from 56 percent in 1996, 78 percent in 1997 to 45 percent in 2003), the military (from 74 percent in 1996, 71 percent in 1997 to 59 percent in 2003), the police (from 57 percent in 1996, 42 percent in 1997 to 50 percent in 2003), and political parties (from 40 percent in 1996, 20 percent in 1997 to 15 percent in 2003).

Ordinary Korean evidently lost their confidence in every public institution in the wake of the economic crisis. Notable is that two core political institutions of a representative democracy, the legislature and the executive, experienced the sharpest decline in public confidence. Even the judicial branch of government registered a substantial decline in public confidence. The percentage having some degree of trust in all of the three branches of government sharply dropped from 38 percent in 1996 to 8 percent in 2003. It is surprising that only less than one-tenth places some degree of trust in all of the three branches of government. An absolute majority of the Korean public is cynical to the performance of core state institutions.

(Table 1 here)

Why has public trust in political institutions declined while public satisfaction with the working of democracy increased over the same period of time? Perhaps criteria of evaluation vary depending upon the target of evaluation or across political institutions (Listhaug and Wiberg 1995; Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2001). Although democratic satisfaction and institutional trust generally reflect evaluation of democratic performance, their targets or referents may differ. That is why the trajectories of democratic satisfaction and institutional trust appear to be in the opposite direction. We will address this issue later.

Overall, more ordinary Koreans expressed support for democracy as an idea and some degree of satisfaction with the working of democracy. In contrast, only a few Koreans placed some degree of trust in all of the three branches of government. The trends in both democratic legitimacy and democratic satisfaction evidently indicate an optimistic outlook on democratic consolidation. In contrast, the trends in institutional trust indicate a pessimistic outlook on it. Is the rise in satisfaction with the working of democracy an indication that a new democracy in Korea developed into a mature democracy? Is the decline in levels of institutional trust a sign that a new democracy in Korea is in trouble? These questions will be addressed in the later section.

Demographic Differences

After presenting the patterns and dynamics of support for democracy, we now examine whether support for democracy, especially evaluation of democratic performance varies among the different segments of the Korean population. By using the 2003 EAB survey data we analyze the relationship between democratic satisfaction and institutional trust on the one hand and the five demographic variables on the other.

As shown in Table 2, democratic satisfaction does vary across some demographic categories of the Korean people. First, the proportion indicating some degree of democratic satisfaction is significantly higher among the elderly (60 and older) and the poorly educated (less

than high school education). In contrast, trust in the three branches of government does not vary much across most of demographic categories except region of residence. Significantly higher proportions having trust in the three branches of government are found among residents of Cholla, which is the stronghold of the Kim Dae Jung government. Age and education appear to make some differences in institutional trust. Those having trust in the three branches of government are more found among the elderly (60 and older) and the poorly educated (less than high school education). Yet, gender and income makes no difference. It is evident that regardless of any demographic categories far more Koreans have no trust in core state institutions of a representative democracy, the executive and the legislature.

(Table 2 here)

Determinants of Support for Democracy

There exist two views of support for democracy. The more popular instrumental view of democratic support holds that democracy is supported as a means to other ends. This view stresses performance-driven loyalty to democracy (Rogowski 1974). Some instrumental theorists assert that economic performance matters more while others emphasize the significance of political performance. In contrast, the intrinsic view of democratic support holds that democracy is supported as an end in itself. This view stresses norm-based loyalty to democracy. Intrinsic theorists assert that values and norms acquired through political socialization matter more for democratic support (Easton and Dennis 1969; Dahl 1971).

Both views are complementary in understanding the dynamics of support for democracy. Nonetheless, when analyzing support for democracy, it is desirable to distinguish performance-based support from norm-based support, because their consequences significantly differ. When democracy as an idea is strongly supported among the population, poor performance may have little effect on democratic stability. In contrast, when democracy as an idea is not strongly

supported, poor performance may have a detrimental influence on democratic stability. In the long run, support for democracy as an idea is strengthened or weakened by experiences with the working of democracy or the performance of democratic institutions. Recognizing the importance of performance-based support for democracy, we now focus on what causes people to be satisfied with the working of democracy or to place trust in political institutions.

Performance theorists claim that people support democracy because they believe that democracy fulfills their demands and delivers expected outcomes. Modernization theorists regard economic development as its most important pay-offs (Lipset 1959). As McDonough, Barnes and Lopez Pena (1986) suggest, however, types of pay-offs people expect and the priorities they place on them may differ. Hence, the criteria by which people evaluate democratic performance may vary. Recently, researchers of third-wave democracies increasingly demonstrate that political pay-offs matter more than economic ones. In their work on post-Communist countries, for instance, Rose, Mishler and Haerpfer (1998) demonstrate that regime performance, especially political one, matters more for democratic support. In a similar study on post-Communist Europe, Evans and Whitefield (1995) also discovers that political performance is more important than economic one in generating normative democratic support. In their single-country study of the dynamics of democratic commitment in Korea, Shin and McDonough (1999) show that evaluations of governmental performance and democratic experiences are more important in developing support for democracy than evaluations of economy or the quality of life. In their comparative analysis of support for democracy in Africa, Bratton and Mattes (2001) emphasize that the government's capacity at delivering political goods than economic ones plays a more important role in approval of democracy. After reviewing recent empirical research findings, Diamond (1999) concludes that support for democracy strongly depends on political performance of the regime, its delivery on political goods.

Considering prior theory and research on support for democracy, the major explanatory variables of our model are grouped into three broad categories or explanatory themes: (1) politics, (2) state governance, and (3) economy. First, to assess the impact of politics on evaluation of democratic performance, a pair of questions is used to measure electoral democratization while another pair political liberalization.¹ Second, to assess the impact of state governance on evaluation of democratic performance, a pair of questions is used to measure the fairness of state governance while another pair its transparency.² Third, to assess the impact of economy on evaluation of democratic performance, four standard questions are used to measure current and retrospective evaluations of national as well as household economy.

In addition to the above explanatory variables we add two more variables relevant for evaluation of democratic performance. Partisanship is added because no attachment to any political party may indicate political alienation from the existing political system. Political ideology is also included because it is related to skepticism about or allegiance to political institutions. Lastly, we control for the usual socio-demographic variables such as gender, age, education, and income.

We test the impact of these various factors by running a regression model for evaluation of democratic performance, which is measured separately either democratic satisfaction or

¹ Two questions to measure electoral democratization are as follows: (1) “How fairly do you think the last presidential election was conducted?” and (2) “How satisfied or unsatisfied are you with the result of the last presidential election?” Responses to both questions were combined to construct a 7-point index ranging from a low of 1 to a high of 7. Two questions to measure political liberalization are as follows; (1) “To what extent do you think people are free to express their political opinion these days?” and (2) “To what extent do you think people are free to join the group they would like to join these days?” Responses to both questions were combined to construct a 7-point index ranging from a low of 1 to a high of 7.

² Two questions to measure the fairness of governance are as follows; (1) “How fairly do you think laws are enforced in our society these days?” and (2) “To what extent was the Kim Dae Jung government regionally biased in treating people?” Responses to both questions were combined to construct a 7-point scale index ranging from a low of 1 to a high of 7. Two questions to measure the transparency of governance are as follows; (1) “How widespread do you think political corruption was under the Kim Dae Jung government?” and (2) “How transparent or open was the Kim Dae Jung government to the public?” Responses to both questions were combined to construct a 7-point scale index ranging from a low of 1 to a high of 7.

institutional trust.³ Table 3 shows the results. The OLS procedure generates standardized and unstandardized regression coefficients for each predictor. The explanatory model accounts for 15.9 percent of the variance in democratic satisfaction. It also explains 13.3 percent of the variance in institutional trust.

Let us first examine the effects of the explanatory variables on satisfaction with the working of democracy. First, the effects of political performance remain significant even if we control for other performance variables. Specifically, the effects of political liberalization and electoral democratization are substantial and in the expected direction. Second, the quality of state governance also substantially contributes to democratic satisfaction. Specifically, two features of good governance, fairness and transparency, play an important role. Third, the effects of institutional attachment are significant and substantial. Attachment to any political party or right-wing ideology increases democratic satisfaction. Fourth, not all economic assessments contribute to democratic satisfaction. Only the effects of current evaluations of the national economy are statistically significant. Lastly, demographic factors except education have no significant effects on democratic satisfaction.

The results evidently show that support for democracy-in-action measured by democratic satisfaction largely depends upon political performance and state governance. The influence of economy is largely negligible. The combined effects of politics and governance variables are overwhelmingly larger than those of economy variables. Among politics and governance variables, political liberalization matters most for democratic satisfaction.

(Table 3 here)

³ The Institutional Trust Index is calculated by adding trust in government values, trust in parliament values and trust in courts values, then subtracting 2. The index range is from 1 to 10 where high values indicate high trust and low values indicate low trust in three branches of government.

Let us turn our attention to the effects of the explanatory variables on institutional trust. First, the effects of political performance are statistically insignificant when we control for economy and governance variables. In contrast, the quality of state governance plays a critical role in institutional trust. Their coefficients are substantial and in the expected direction. Specifically, the transparency of state governance contributes most to institutional trust. Third, the effects of institutional attachment are statistically significant. Attachment to any political party or right-wing ideology increases institutional trust. Fourth, not all economic assessments contribute to institutional trust. The effects of current evaluations of national economy as well as retrospective evaluations of personal economy are statistically significant. Lastly, none of demographic factors have significant effects on institutional trust.

The results evidently show that support for democracy-in-action measured by trust in the three branches of government largely depends upon the quality of state governance rather than political performance. Some economic assessments, especially retrospective egoistic economic assessments play a critical role.

As far as institutional trust is concerned, electoral democratization and political liberalization does not matter much. What matters is the quality of state governance and some economic conditions. In contrast, as far as democratic satisfaction is concerned, electoral democratization and political liberalization as well as the quality of governance matter much. Yet, economic conditions largely do not matter. As a whole, the analysis reveals that support for democracy-in-action measured by institutional trust depends upon economy as well state governance. In contrast, support for democracy-in-action measured by democratic satisfaction depends upon politics as well as state governance.

Evidently, ordinary Koreans are satisfied with the way their democracy works not because the economy gets better but because political processes become democratic and state governance

becomes based on the rule of law. Moreover, ordinary Koreans place confidence in core state institutions not because political processes become democratic but because state governance becomes based on the rule of law and the economy gets better. This suggests that state governance disregarding the rule of law could undermine support for democracy-in-action, which may hinder democratic consolidation. As political liberalization and electoral democratization proceed, the quality of state governance becomes increasingly relevant for evaluating the performance of democratic institutions. We may conclude that in the long run democratic consolidation in Korea requires the development of state governance based on the rule of law.

Conclusion

One of the important findings of the analysis is that the protection of political rights and freedoms and the institutionalization of democratic elections are significant predictors of democratic satisfaction, but not institutional trust. In contrast, state governance based on the rule of law is a significant predictor of not only democratic satisfaction but also institutional trust. This finding suggests that the distinction between politics and governance may be important in understanding the patterns and dynamics of support for democracy. People may emphasize electoral democratization and political liberalization when evaluating the performance of democracy. When evaluating the performance of political institutions, they may stress democratization of state governance.

The finding that political performance matters more for democratic support than economic performance is largely consistent with prior research findings (Evans and Whitefield 1995; Shin and McDonough 1999). For instance, Rose, Mishler and Haerpfer (1998) contend that “the most powerful determinants of rejection of authoritarian alternatives are political: a negative evaluation of the former communist regime and the perception of greater political freedom in the current

regime.” Yet, our analysis also demonstrates that political performance plays an important role only in democratic satisfaction, but not in institutional trust.

Our analysis shows that electoral democratization and political liberalization is not enough to increase public trust in institutions for governance. As people enjoy freedom of expression and association and exercise their rights to elect political leaders, they are more likely to feel their democracy works well. Nonetheless, they do not necessarily place trust in governing institutions. When they see state governance fairer and more balanced as well as less corrupt and more open, they are more likely to feel their governing institutions perform well.

Institutionally, Korea has become an electoral democracy where the democratic principle of popular sovereignty is well practiced at all levels of government through regularly scheduled electoral contests. Yet, its state governance is beset with immobilizing institutional deadlock and political bickering. It has also yet to tackle the age-old problems of political corruption, informal and personal rule, and the arbitrary use of power by state institutions. Disappointed by frequent failures of democratically constituted state institutions to practice the rule of law or to exercise power democratically, many ordinary Koreans appear to be critical to the performance of political institutions. It is why the trajectory of democratic satisfaction becomes steadily upward while that of institutional trust downward.

Theoretically, the findings suggest that it is helpful in understanding the dynamics of support for democracy to maintain a distinction between politics and governance. If politics largely concerns the constitution of power while governance the exercise of power, support for democracy is likely to reflect not only the performance of democratic politics but also that of democratic governance. It goes without saying that satisfaction with politics does not entail satisfaction with state governance. It should be stressed that even if political power is democratically constituted, it may not be democratically exercised for the common good. In the public opinion research

conducted in third-wave democracies during the past two decades, however, the distinction between politics and governance has yet to receive adequate exploration.

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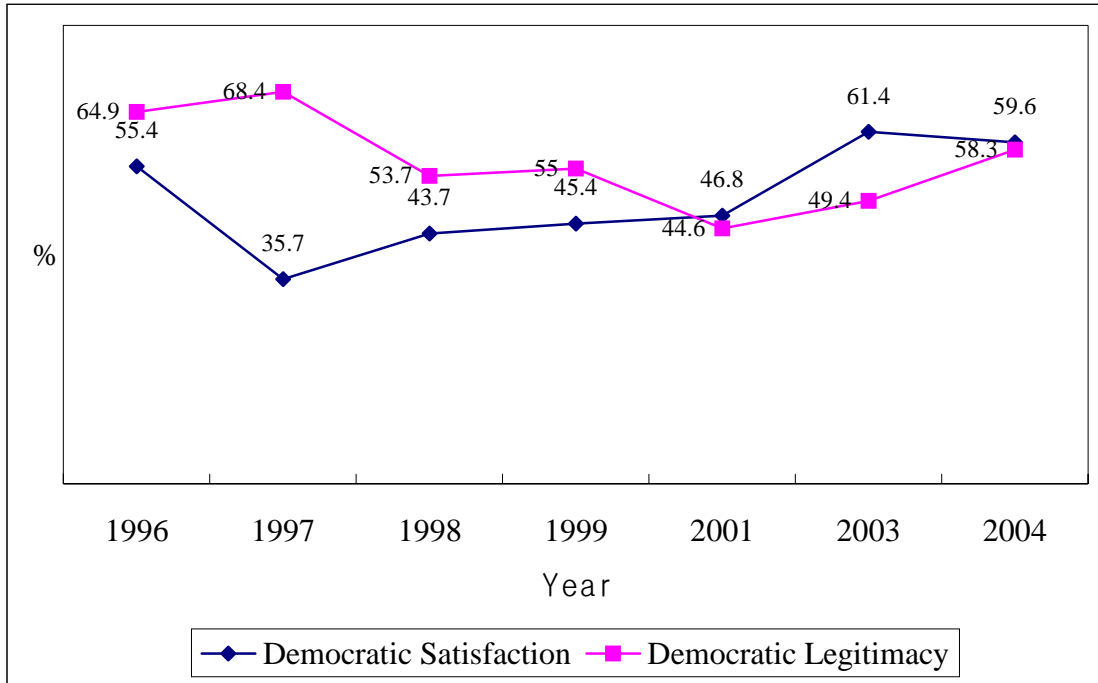
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Figure 1. Trends in Support for Democracy



Source: 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2001 and 2004 KDB surveys; 2003 EAB survey

Table 1. Trust in Public Institutions

	1996	1997	2003	Change (1996-2003)
Executive	62.1	-	26.1	-36.0
Legislature	49.1	21.5	15.4	-33.5
Courts	70.4	57.5	50.9	-19.9
Three branches of government	38.0	-	7.0	-30.1
Civil service	56.1	44.9	44.8	-11.3
Military	74.0	66.7	58.9	-15.1
Police	57.0	41.7	49.9	-7.1
Political parties	39.5	19.5	14.9	-24.6

Entries are percentages saying “a great deal” or “quite a lot of” trust

Source: 1996 and 1997 KDB surveys, 2003 EAB survey

Table 2. Demographic Differences in Support for Democracy

	Satisfaction with Democracy	Trust in Government	Trust in Parliament	Trust in Courts	Institutional Trust *
Gender					
Male	23.7%	25.9%	15.6%	48.7%	-36.7%
Female	30.8	26.3	15.1	53.0	-32.4
Age					
20-29	15.7	25.8	14.0	52.5	-34.0
30-39	23.5	23.2	12.0	48.0	-38.7
40-49	27.8	23.9	14.4	46.5	-41.9
50-59	29.3	30.9	18.4	52.9	-29.4
60 & older	50.0	31.0	22.1	58.0	-21.7
Education					
<High	48.8	34.3	21.3	58.2	-14.5
High	25.2	22.1	14.3	49.1	-37.3
College+	21.5	26.7	13.3	49.0	-37.9
Income					
Lowest	32.5	27.4	17.1	50.7	-33.9
Low	28.4	26.0	17.1	47.6	-35.3
Middle	25.4	25.0	15.0	53.5	-32.4
High	21.8	24.4	15.5	50.8	-34.6
Highest	26.7	27.9	11.7	52.6	-36.0
Region					
Kyongsang	22.9	19.6	9.7	49.2	-42.3
Cholla	31.2	53.6	42.8	71.7	3.0
Others	32.2	24.1	13.0	47.9	-37.7

* Percents of trust in all three branches – percents of trust in none of them

Source: 2003 EAB survey

Table 3. Effects of Economy, Politics and Governance on Support for Democracy

	Democratic Satisfaction			Institutional Trust ^a		
	B	S.E.	Beta	B	S.E.	Beta
<i>Economy:</i>						
National economy today	.051	.023	.064*	.180	.070	.074*
National economy 5 years ago	.001	.018	n.s.	.047	.057	n.s.
Household economy today	.028	.022	n.s.	.074	.069	n.s.
Household economy 5 years ago	.017	.019	n.s.	.201	.060	.100**
<i>Politics:</i>						
Political freedoms	.092	.012	.183**	.043	.038	n.s.
Electoral politics	.038	.013	.078**	-.015	.039	n.s.
<i>State governance:</i>						
Fairness	.062	.015	.116**	.197	.046	.121**
Transparency	.066	.015	.118**	.284	.048	.165**
<i>Institutional attachment:</i>						
Partisanship	.103	.030	.083**	.267	.094	.070**
Ideology (left-right)	.051	.010	.130**	.112	.030	.093**
<i>Socio-demographic variables:</i>						
Gender	.014	.027	n.s.	.050	.085	n.s.
Age	.001	.012	n.s.	.062	.038	n.s.
Education	-.062	.024	-.082*	-.092	.076	n.s.
Income	-.012	.010	n.s.	.015	.031	n.s.
N	1,458			1,466		
Adjusted ²	.159			.133		

* Significant at <.05. ** Significant at <.01. n.s.: not significant.

Source: 2003 EAB survey

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